COMMENTARY

Dems denied Black voters and the South more power



Will Sutton

Louisiana Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jaime Davis wore a big smile on election night. Mississippi Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Scott Colom wore a big smile on election night. Florida U.S. Senate candidate Angie Nixon wore a big smile on election night, too.

Two of them lost their elections. One has been holding on, waiting for The Associated Press, television networks and streaming services that cover politics to "declare" him the winner.

Colom is expected to be a winner — after several days of watching a sliver of a vote count in his favor slowly increase. Some wea-in't-accepting-that folks are likely to sue to keep Colom from traveling to Washington as Mississippi's first Democrat elected statewide since 1982. He would be the first Black person elected to a statewide office since James Hill moved into role of Mississippi secretary of state in 1878, just after Reconstruction.

Davis and Nixon lost narrowly as Democrats won an overwhelming majority of the U.S. House of Representatives and a smaller majority in the Senate.

Republicans are pointing fingers, asking who messed up. Some Democrats are pointing fingers, asking who messed up.

Davis, Nixon and Colom had impressive campaigns. Colom had help from national Democrats late in his campaign when his numbers were looking good, but Davis and Nixon had none. Imagine if the big boys and gals had believed in them.

As of late September according to the filings to the Federal Election Commission, the Democratic National Committee had raised more than $252 million; the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee had raised around $216 million; and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee had raised more than $256 million. Too many numbers? That's more than $725 million to spend on Democratic candidates for Congress this cycle.

Davis and Nixon got none of that money. Davis lost by 1.8 percentage points, and Nixon lost by about 3 percentage points.

Colom is likely to be Mississippi's next U.S. senator, winning by a measly 0.27 percentage points as of Tuesday morning as votes continued to be tallied.

As Davis told me on WBOK's "Good Morning Show" the day after the Nov. 3 election, "Imagine what we could've done with $1 to $3 million. ..."

Nixon told MSNOW that when she spoke to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer about supporting her campaign, "it was basically a 'we will see.' … He's going to look into it. That's what was said, that he's going to look into it."

Weeks before the election, Colom told Mississippi Today, "We can win this November if Democrats double down on rebuilding our power in the South by investing in states like Mississippi."

Some reports say that the national party sent $3 million to Wisconsin; about $2 million per state to Pennsylvania, Michigan and Nevada and about $1.5 million to Arizona. North Carolina got $1.2 million. Georgia got about $1 million.

Once again, as they have over and over, Democrats relied on Black voters to push them over the top. Meanwhile, they pushed Black voters off the field of play so others could win.

Why, oh why, can't they open their eyes and see what's happening?

Why, oh why, didn't they listen to Baton Rouge Democratic activist Gary Chambers, U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, former U.S. Rep. Cedric Richmond or Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson?

Should Schumer, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, DNC Chair Ken Martin, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Chair Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and DCCC Chair Rep. Suzan DelBene lose their jobs based on an inability to read the room?



STAFF PHOTO BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

U.S. Senate candidate Jamie Davis gives a speech during an election party at the Hilton Baton Rouge on Nov. 3.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis, who died in 2020, saw the possibilities years ago.

"When the state of Georgia becomes blue, along with the state of Texas, they will not be able to hold us down," Lewis said in 2018, in almost a premonition of what happened last week.

More than 50% of the nation's Black population lives in the South. Close to 20 million are eligible to vote. More than 30% of all active voters in Louisiana, Mississippi and Georgia are Black.

Georgia will have Black women in multiple statewide elected positions after these elections. Mississippi will have its first Black elected U.S. senator in forever. And Louisiana still hasn't elected a Black official statewide since Reconstruction.

Richmond told me on WBOK on Tuesday that Democrats underestimating the Black vote in the South "will never happen again." I pray he's right.

Colom's mother is a retired judge who was the first African American elected to the chancery court in her region of Mississippi. She isn't the most active on social media. But in 2022, she posted on Twitter a quote by James Baldwin:

"It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have."

The question is whether Democrats will be that enemy after enjoying tremendous success yet falling short of an even greater victory.

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GOP failed to make the argument



Cal Thomas

One week after the Republican midterm election debacle, questions about how it happened while sorting through the debris that left Democrats in charge of Congress, many governorships and state legislators will likely continue for some time. If the election had been solely about the many achievements of the Trump administration — from closing the border, deporting criminals and cutting taxes — Republicans would likely have won. Instead, Republicans fielded weak candidates, mostly picked by President Donald Trump, who were subservient to his corrosive personality and need to be worshipped, turning off many voters more concerned with gas and food prices and his vacillation about Iran.

Chief among the reasons Republicans lost, I think, is their failure to recall a line from the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: "First you win the argument, then you win the vote." The problem for Republicans this cycle was they not only failed to win the argument; they never made the argument and thus lost the vote.

In odious GOP TV ads that ran back to back with equally obnoxious Democrat ads, there was little about issues at the top of voters' minds. They mostly attacked their opponent and made promises voters should have known they can't keep. Each candidate called the other everything but an American. Our real enemies are not subject to such vile words.

My reaction to these ads was to hit the mute bottom and look away. I suspect I was not alone. According to Open Secrets, an independent organization that tracks campaign finance, an estimated $12 billion was spent on this campaign (Elon Musk donated $446 million).

In Texas, a half-billion dollars was spent with Musk contributing $225 million. No amount of money can replace good ideas and good character. This year's election should finally prove that. The consultants who claim negative ads win should not be hired for the 2028 contest, but likely will, unfortunately.

Back to Margaret Thatcher, who believed that lasting political change can't be solely achieved through short-term maneuvering or superficial public relations. Thatcher embraced ideological clarity and deep preparation over consensus-driven, or reactive politics.

In the past whether a candidate was "soft on communism" was sometimes a winning issue for Republicans, but the past — even the recent past — is not enough. Young people did not experience the Cold War, Soviet communism and the threat of nuclear annihilation. Think of this: A new generation has grown up since the 9/11/01 terrorist attack. Students are being taught things, especially at liberal universities, that are contrary to the economic, political, social and moral standards which have sustained this country through what my parents' generation used to call "thick and thin."

Reaching younger people was what Charlie Kirk was doing with great success until he was murdered. Kirk visited college campuses with his "prove me wrong" tour. Through rational argument and deconstructing the beliefs students had been taught were true, Kirk was changing minds. That could have contributed to his murder. It almost certainly contributed to the hate directed at him by some on the left who worried they might lose a significant part of their base.

Republicans can't take for granted that the ideas of previous generations will automatically be accepted by younger people who get their "news" mostly from TikTok and other social media platforms. Many also seem to succumb to pressure from friends to conform to a secular-progressive ideology.

A TV ad for the Progressive insurance company has this tag line: "Progressive can't protect you from becoming your parents …" Given how my parents and grandparents lived by different standards than today's entitlement generation, becoming like those people is looking better all the time.

First, however, Republicans must make and then win the argument.

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Remembering John D. Rockefeller IV, 'poverty worker, governor, senator, regular guy'



David Shribman

EMMONS, W.Va. — He was a gangly, strapping youth, fired with idealism and ambition, hampered by a last name that was a synonym both for great wealth and grand theft. His breeding showed; he noticed an antique table here or a crocheted bedspread there. But his instincts showed, too; he was drawn to poverty and the challenge of defeating it.

At the start he lived with Betty and Ned Chilton, the state's royalty by virtue of their control of the Charleston Gazette newspaper, and in their four-poster king bed, just off their living room, he contemplated his future as a 27-year old VISTA poverty worker in this alien land, where he played racquetball and tennis at the Edgewood Country Club but also ventured into mountain fastnesses where progress, and economic growth, were slow.

"He was astonished by it — the towns, the mines — and he was taken by the people's goodness and by their bad lot," Betty Chilton told me more than a third of a century ago. "He found something worthwhile here."

John D. Rockefeller IV — poverty worker, governor, senator, regular guy with a formidable, forbidding surname — died last week at age 89. He left behind a legacy of compassion and creativity and, it must be said, courage. He was both aristocrat and activist, remembered in Washington, where his domain was Capitol Hill, as courtly; in Charleston, where he strode confidently through the halls of the state Capitol, as a bit stubborn; and in a tiny hamlet called Emmons as a worker, worrier, and warrior against poverty.

He reached this community by driving five miles up a one-lane road in a pencil-thin valley between two mountains. In his time the roads weren't paved and often were impassable in winter.

This remote enclave in the only state that lies entirely within Appalachia was his laboratory. But the truth is that he fought the poverty, and the poverty won.

His very appearance here was astonishing enough. The first time he met Shirley Giles, the wife of the pastor of the Rumble Community Baptist Church, she was sunning her mattress. No member of Rockefeller's family sunned a mattress.

From the start he tried to fit in, knowing of course that he couldn't fully do so, knowing that he could afford a plane ticket out of West Virginia without consulting his personal budget.

More than three decades ago, when I visited Emmons, I encountered Vivian Parcell, who that morning was canning peaches and tomatoes in a mobile home set on a cinderblock foundation. She remembered how Rockefeller would stop into a home and if the family was eating pinto beans, he'd sit down and have pinto beans, too.

Rockefeller saw opportunity here — he saw the potential of a splendid political career here, the way his first cousin, Winthrop Rockefeller, did in Arkansas, serving as governor in Little Rock from 1967 to 1971 — but he also liked West Virginia. He had a taste for Baroque music, to be sure, but also for bare-knuckles politics. And he thought West Virginia was a good place to rear a family, though the Democratic nephew of Republican Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York and the daughter of GOP Sen. Charles H. Percy of Illinois made for an unusual Mountaineer marriage.

He lost his first gubernatorial race to Arch Moore. When he finally prevailed as governor, he presided over very high unemployment, statewide as high as 24 percent and in some counties in the 40 percent range, and lost a bitter battle for a $750 million Roads for Jobs and Progress bond issue. "It made no sense to borrow money when interest rates were soaring," said former state attorney general Mario Palombo. "But he was stubborn and didn't back down." James "Tiger" Morton, a Rockefeller political counselor added: "It was a humiliating public defeat."

In his first gubernatorial race, Rockefeller filmed a commercial pointing to a pothole and vowing to have it filled. Moore, delighted that his rival had chosen a pothole on a city road rather than a state byway, dashed off a telegram to Rockefeller: "Every true West Virginian knows his potholes. There are round ones, square ones, and some of weird shapes like, for example, the state of New York."

Rockefeller recovered from his gaffe, and eventually filled many potholes. But his demise this month left a hole in the heart of West Virginia and the country roads in the place where, he might have sung along with John Denver, he belonged.

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